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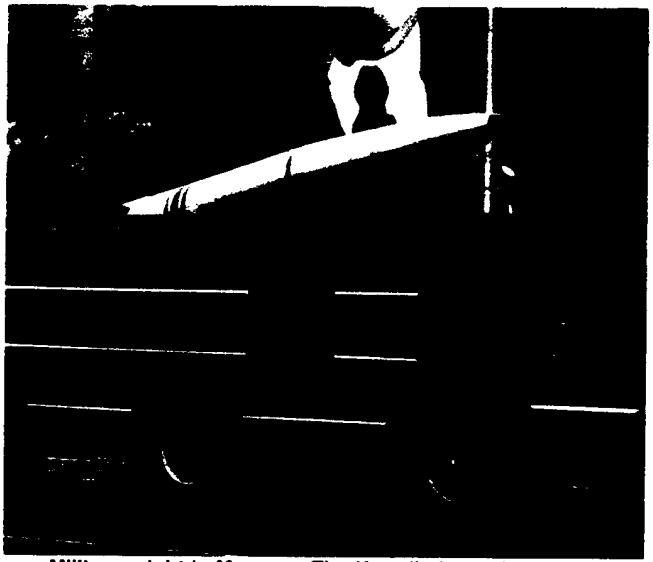
Hopes for an arms deal with the Soviet Union have been raised again following the President's Glassboro speech. The American people will be deluded if they think it could foreshadow an easing of the historic political competition between the superpowers, says Zbigniew Brzezinski, national-security adviser from 1977 to 1981. His book *Game Plan* sets out a strategy for the U.S. to pursue in an enduring struggle. This is a second exclusive extract.

THE TRAP OF ARMS CONTROL

■ For many well-meaning Americans, arms control is the shortcut to peace and security. For Soviet leaders, it is a tool for seeking strategic preponderance. The uses and limits of arms control must be properly understood lest its more extremist manifestations should someday render the United States strategically impotent.

The contamination of strategy by pacifism is the key danger for the United States inherent in crusading arms control. Strategy in international affairs involves doctrine and techniques backed by the forces required to prevail—either politically or by combat. The ability to stop the opponent from winning militarily is the precondition for competing politically. Strategy and force are thus organically linked. But pacifism, a natural corollary of the democratic condition, reflects the understandable and morally righteous popular rejection of violence as the means of settling disputes. Its most simplistic manifestation is represented by the willingness to disarm unilaterally in the proclaimed belief "better Red than dead."



Military might in Moscow. The Kremlin has a free hand, says Brzezinski, unlike the United States. No protest groups interfere with Soviet decisions on strategy

Its more sophisticated variant places a premium on arms control as the central facet of the U.S.-Soviet relationship—elevating these negotiations almost to a fetish and seeing in them the key to ending the nightmare created by nuclear weapons.

The problem with this approach, more a matter of mood than doctrine, is, first, that it thrives only in the pluralistic and democratic nations: An independent arms-control lobby is not tolerated in the Soviet Union. Second, it focuses on the symptoms and not the causes of U.S.-Soviet tensions and their threat to peace. It disregards the fact that the nuclear-arms race is the product of a deeper, historically rooted political conflict. Many arms-control enthusiasts ignore the central historical lesson of the 40-year-old U.S.-Soviet contest: Without the fearful restraint generated by the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, the two superpowers in all probability would have gone to war against each other on more than one occasion.

Moreover, arms-control zealotry hurts constructive arms control. It places enormous political pressure on U.S. decision makers to make concessions to Moscow for the sake of agreements but without putting corresponding pressures on Soviet decision makers.

Additionally, many of the more outspoken proponents of arms control have opposed since the mid-1970s the acquisition by the United States of new strategic weapons systems. Kremlin leaders have therefore had an incentive to stall in negotiations. They watch happily as the U.S. strategic modernization program is steadily eroded. In the meantime, the negotiation of a truly stabilizing arms-control agreement with the Soviet Union has been rendered more difficult.

It is not happenstance that Soviet officials and propagandists are frequent participants in American arms-control gatherings and institutes. With no Soviet counterpart to such organizations permitted to interfere with Moscow's strategic decision making, the American arms-control constituency offers the Kremlin a unique opportunity for mobilizing domestic public opinion against U.S. defense programs, for attempting to influence U.S. strategic thought and even for gaining access to internal U.S. discussions of strategy and of military technological innovation. In this manner, the Soviets have become in effect indirect participants in the American strategic dialogue, thereby gaining both influence and military intelligence. This corruption of the domestic American discussion on the centrally important issue of survival in the nuclear age is one of the more damaging consequences of arms-control pacifism.

The "freeze" hoax

Consider the 1984 presidential election. The Republican administration had come to power in 1981 committed to enhancing U.S. strategic capabilities but had totally mishandled the MX-missile issue. First, political expediency led it to abandon its Democratic predecessor's congressionally approved decision to deploy in Western states 200 survivably based launchers with 2,000 missiles. Then, simple strategic incompetence led the administration to advocate such vulnerable MX basing modes that Congress was provoked to reduce the number of missiles to fewer than 50. There

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was therefore ample room for a critical appraisal. Yet instead of engaging in the needed public debate, the Democratic Party was diverted into advocacy of a nuclear "freeze." Even its most prominent adherents could not indicate precisely what was to be "frozen" and how.

A convincing answer would have required a precise indication of which weapons systems would be affected, what had to be done to make certain that a "freeze" could not be evaded under the guise of peaceful nuclear-energy applications, what verification techniques would be used and at what stages of weapons production compliance would be monitored and what would be the strategic consequences both of an effective "freeze" and also of its one-sided evasion. In brief, the issue was a hoax.

Similar emotions and irrelevancies were sparked by President Reagan's initiative, announced in March, 1983, to explore the desirability of strategic defense. Launched without adequate preparation and formulated in vague and even utopian terms, the President's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) invited criticism. But given the centrality of the issue of nuclear deterrence, it deserved a serious examination. It did not get it. What needed scrutiny was whether ongoing deployments of offensive weapons might over time render increasingly precarious the existing deterrent to war—the threat of mutual assured destruction (MAD). Could the alternative of strategic defense be implemented either unilaterally or through bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union in a manner that would actually increase mutual security?

Arguments launched against the SDI were a flurry of self-contradictory propositions. They argued that a strategic defense would be technologically impossible to build, that it would be prohibitively expensive, that it could easily be overwhelmed by Soviet countermeasures, that it would be highly destabilizing and that it would force the Soviets to follow the U.S. lead, thereby producing an arms race in space. Of course, if the initiative is technically unfeasible, economically ruinous and militarily easy to counter, it is unclear why the SDI would still be destabilizing and why the Soviets should object to America's embarking on such a self-defeating enterprise—and even less clear why the Soviets would then follow suit in reproducing such an undesirable thing for themselves.

But what these arguments reflected more basically was a deep-seated unwillingness to face an unpleasant reality: That strategic stability may have to be sought through unilateral initiatives based on technological innovation rather than through arms control—unless and until the American-Soviet political relationship significantly improves.

That proposition is especially unpalatable to those who view arms control as the centerpiece of U.S.-Soviet relations and who argue that these negotiations should somehow be isolated from the geopolitical conflicts that have fueled and continue to dominate American-Soviet tensions. Such an attempt to isolate arms control from the political context is dangerous and counterproductive. It encourages the Soviets to pursue assertive policies even while negotiating arms control, as they did in Angola after the SALT I agreement of 1972 and the Vladivostok talks in 1974 and in Ethiopia and Afghanistan during the negotiation of and the ratification debate over the SALT II accord. Eventually, the indifference to Soviet actions on the part of arms controllers prompted an understandable public reaction against all arms-control agreements—even when these were in the interest of the U.S.

A dangerous euphoria

Quite understandably, the Soviets do favor separating arms control from geopolitics. It permits them to wage the political struggle while benefiting from the political impression that the rivalry has waned. Soviet leaders are aware that euphoria generated by arms-control treaties tends to inhibit American defense programs or geopolitical responses to Soviet challenges. SALT agreements, which have not formally limited either American or Soviet strategic-weapons innovation, have nonetheless had the effect of uniquely obstructing the modernization of U.S. forces. Within the American body politic, the impression grew that such programs were no longer needed and indeed were counter to the spirit or even to the letter of arms accords.

The history of both the SALT I and the SALT II negotiations is painfully instructive. Throughout both these negotiations the Soviets strove to create the impression of a more generalized accommodation. Thus, Soviet leaders placed special emphasis on the Nixon-Brezhnev declaration of joint principles and spoke grandly of the era of détente—while simultaneously pressing assertive geopolitical initiatives and striving to limit U.S. advances in strategic weaponry.

Anti-American demonstration in France. According to Brzezinski, pacifist groups ignore the fact that the nuclear-arms race results from a deeper, historically rooted political conflict—and they may help render the U.S. strategically impotent

Arms control has consequences beyond the military balance—and the Soviets have shown themselves to be sensitive to its political-perceptual dimensions. Although adding up the numbers of strategic systems can produce a misleading analysis of power militarily, the numbers do matter politically. During the 1974 summit in Moscow, a senior U.S. official exclaimed at a press conference, "What in the name of God is strategic superiority?" In previous back-channel negotiations, the United States had agreed to a formula allowing a larger number of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM's) for the Soviet Union than for the U.S.—308 Soviet heavy missiles to none for the United States. Soviet leaders derived evident satisfaction from the resulting public perception

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of Soviet strategic superiority. They were well aware that power and status in international affairs are inseparable.

This does not mean that we should abandon arms control. But it does mean that it must be pursued with the clear awareness, publicly articulated and frequently reiterated, of one key fact: Arms control is part of our national-defense policy, not a substitute for it. Arms-control agreements imply neither political accommodation nor an end to strategic competition.

Shadow of pre-emptive attack

Short of such a historic transformation of the American-Soviet relationship, the more promising route for arms control is to seek narrowly focused, highly specific—perhaps "interim"—arrangements. These must be subject to verification, including on-site inspection of mobile missile launchers. Furthermore, they must concentrate on the central issues: Those existing weapons systems, or ones soon to be deployed, that represent the most acute security threat for each side.

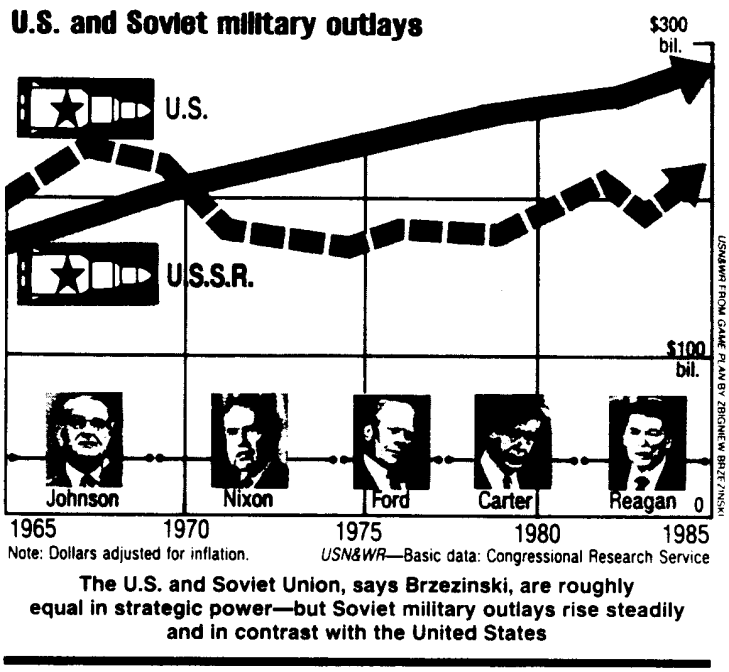
It cannot be emphasized too strongly that numerical reductions per se are not arms control. Genuine arms control should increase the security *of both sides.* It requires much more refined trade-offs than the quest for numerical symmetry. Neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union can in the near future avoid societal devastation in the event of nuclear war, so arms control has to deal with the longer-range danger that a pre-emptive attack could disarm one side's strategic forces, thereby foreclosing effective retaliation. That means concentrating on agreeing to limit and reduce strategic systems that have the capacity or have been designed primarily for strategic attack and not for societal retaliation.

In other words, fewer is not necessarily better. An arms-control agreement that cuts strategic nuclear arsenals by 50 percent would simply produce greater instability if it left both sides with proportionately more first-strike systems—for, unless otherwise specified, each side is likely to dismantle first its older, less accurate systems. The emphasis in future comprehensive arms-control agreements must shift from quantitative reductions to qualitative prohibitions. The number of systems capable of undertaking a precise first-strike attack must be driven below the number required to make such an attack militarily effective.

This would require a significant reduction in deployment of the principal existing Soviet counterforce weapon, the SS-18 missile, to about the levels proposed by the United States in 1977—no more than 150 launchers with 1,500 warheads. There would have to be a corresponding limit on the deployment of counterforce-capable Soviet SLBM warheads and of the new SS-24 and SS-25 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's). On the American side, corresponding limits would have to apply to the MX, the proposed mobile Midgetman and the Trident-based D-5 missiles, in amounts equal to the Soviet levels. All reductions and prohibitions would have to be subject to foolproof verification.

The American side should make Soviet military secrecy more of a political issue because of its negative effects on arms control. Surreptitious military planning, development and deployment by the Kremlin stimulates the suspicion that arms control may be seen by some Soviet leaders primarily as a breathing spell, designed to lull the U.S. into a false sense of security. Soviet strategic secrecy has another hazard: It could prompt American overestimates of Soviet deployment, thereby precipitating American responses that in their turn could cause the Soviets to escalate.

The basic obstacle to reaching such genuine arms-control agreements is that the United States has no bargaining assets. The deployment of the MX missile, which has the power and accuracy to make the Soviet leadership consider the potential vulnerability of its land-based ICBM's and of its command and shelter centers, has been constrained both by congressional opposition and by programmatic mishandling by the Reagan administration. The D-5 missile is not scheduled for large-scale deployment until the mid-1990s and even then in numbers not sufficient to exert pressure on existing Soviet strategic forces. The future of the MX missile, and even its strategic rationale, is in doubt. Congressionally mandated restrictions on its size may impair its penetrability, while its deployment in a mobile mode is likely to be costly and politically unpalatable.



Note: Dollars adjusted for inflation. *USN&WR*—Basic data: Congressional Research Service

The U.S. and Soviet Union, says Brzezinski, are roughly equal in strategic power—but Soviet military outlays rise steadily and in contrast with the United States

In these circumstances, the quest for strategic security through arms control becomes more difficult, and the threat becomes more real that arms-control agreements reached because of domestic political pressures may stifle U.S. strategic innovation. U.S. strategic impotence could thereby become the dangerous end result.

The U.S. must make a choice among three basic options: (1) to rely on arms control—which only makes sense if it results in a comprehensive and verifiable agreement that massively reduces the Soviet first-strike systems; (2) to maintain the precarious state of mutual assured destruction by proliferating at very high cost its own survivable strategic forces so as to counter the projected enormous expansion in Soviet first-strike systems and covert enhancements in strategic defense; or (3) to move toward mutual strategic security through a moderate expansion and modernization of U.S. strategic-attack forces and the deployment within the decade of a two-tier strategic defense to counter Soviet first-strike weapons.

Option 3 is best. It provides greater security and constitutes the one course of action most likely to persuade the Soviets seriously to consider a truly comprehensive, mutually stabilizing and fully verifiable arms-control agreement. ■

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